United Nations S/2000/221

Security Council

Distr.: General
6 April 2000

Original: English

Letter dated 15 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you herewith a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nagorno Karabagh (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Movses **Abelian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 15 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic

The international community has been making diplomatic and political efforts directed towards the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict for more than ten years. The task of the conflicting parties' authorities is to exercise restraint and tolerance, to support the positive tendencies in the society and not to launch actions that can undermine the fragile peace established in the region.

Unfortunately, we have to note that the Azerbaijani authorities are nevertheless systematically launching actions that create obstacles to the establishment of an atmosphere of mutual confidence and, thus, lasting peace and stability. The statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic on 15 February 2000 and the new wave of the anti-Armenian propaganda within the country were the last actions in this category.

The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic made in connection with the measures used by the Government of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic to involve private foreign capital in the local economy alleges that the programme for the economic development of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic is directed towards the involvement of investors in the "occupied territories", which can negatively influence the peacemaking process.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic is convinced that the assertion can be easily rejected by the Co-Chairmen of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, who are well aware of the real situation in the region, as well as by the personal representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, whose Field Assistants Office is located in Stepanakert.

Urgent efforts have been made in the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic over the last year towards the maintenance of stability in the society, the consolidation of law and order and the creation of favourable conditions for the development of entrepreneurship, which has stimulated the serious interest of foreign financial and industrial circles in Nagorno-Karabagh. It is becoming extremely significant, in the circumstances, that none of the States of the world, except Armenia and the United States of America, assists the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic in resolving humanitarian problems.

The inadequate reaction of the Azerbaijani authorities to the actions of the Government of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic and the aggressive character of the above-mentioned statement are probably conditioned by the fact that the Azerbaijani leadership believes that the reasons for and consequences of the conflict belong to twentieth century history. So we must note that in 1991-1994 the South Caucasus became an arena of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan itself, the consequences of which have not yet been overcome. Its results were destructive, especially for the people of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic, about half of whose territory was occupied, and more than 50 per cent of the population became refugees and

displaced persons; in addition, about 450,000 Armenians were deported from Baku, Sumgait and other cities and villages of Azerbaijan.

During the war, the international organizations and parliaments of some countries repeatedly acknowledged the fact that a humanitarian disaster was occurring in Nagorno-Karabagh, but adequate measures were not used for its prevention. The situation is being aggravated by the illegal blockade of Nagorno-Karabagh and Armenia begun in 1989 by Azerbaijan, which not only irretrievably damages the economy, but also torpedoes the development of the integration processes in the South Caucasus region.

As is known, Azerbaijan has for two years rejected the peaceful proposals put forward by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen and approved by Nagorno-Karabagh and Armenia. The proposals are admitted to be the most acceptable compromise basis for settlement of the conflict. This situation was noted in the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 11 March 1999.

We are convinced that the irreconcilable position of Azerbaijan has proved who is actually and not declaratively seeking the peaceful settlement of the conflict. It has disclosed the real intentions of official Baku — to isolate Nagorno-Karabagh and to preserve and aggravate the economic and humanitarian crisis with the aim of displacing the autochthonal Armenian population from the region.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic, in its statements and memorandums (July 1998 and April 1999), drew the attention of the appropriate international organizations to the fact that an anti-Armenian mood and xenophobia were being aroused in Azerbaijan. Despite the fact that, on the assurance of the OSCE mediation mission, the Azerbaijani authorities were instructed on the inadmissibility of such a campaign, anti-Armenian propaganda in Azerbaijan is being developed further.

A special place is occupied by an article in the newspaper *Bakinski Rabochi* (24 February 2000), the founder of which is the Administrative Department of the President of Azerbaijan. The author of the article, the head of the President's executive staff and a Doctor of Philosophy, uses arguments taken from the anti-Semitism arsenal and offends both the national and religious feelings of the Armenian people.

In this connection, a number of natural questions occur — how does Azerbaijan imagine the peaceful settlement of the conflict under its current position; what fate are the authorities of the country preparing for the people of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic; and, finally, how can the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen hope for success in their peacemaking mission in such circumstances?

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic reassures international organizations and States, which are interested in the quickest possible final settlement of the Karabagh conflict, of the adherence of the Nagorno-Karabagh leadership to the principle of a political settlement of the problem and considers it

necessary to stress once more that the constructive mood of our people is indisputable evidence of its aspirations for peace and stability and its non-acceptance of war as a means of resolving any conflicts.

15 March 2000
Stepanakert